

*#1 Jim Radabaugh*

Michigan's state trails program has over 12,000 miles of designated trails; of this total, 10,200 miles permit motorized trail uses. The trails programs are charged by law to acquire, develop and maintain trails for recreation. We have partnership MOAs with the USDA Forest Service (snowmobile and ORV trails), National Park Service (North Country Trail), and MDOT (Rail-Trails). We also have many local trail partnerships with local units of government and non-profit trail groups. The strength of the Michigan trails programs are its partners, without whom these trails wouldn't exist.

The trail programs can be divided into fee based motorized trail programs and no fee non-motorized trail programs. The motorized program fees provide the basis for the grant programs to the 101 non-profit trail clubs and local units of government to maintain the trail network they use.

The snowmobile trails program has miles, 6,500 miles of trails, covering public and private lands; half of the trails are on private lands. DNR works with 69 trail grant sponsors, who secure the rights in private land for the trails, clear, brush, sign and groom the trails. The snowmobile program has embarked on the acquisition of permanent easements to assure long term sustainability of the program.

(The annual trail permit for the December 1 to March 31 season is \$45 and a new historical sled permit is \$50 for access to the trails without an annual trail permit.)

#### Snowmobile Use and Tourism Study (2009 MSU Study)

- \$412 million Total Annual

- \$173 million equipment spending

- \$239 million trip spending

- Supports 972 direct jobs

The Off-road vehicle trails program has the next greatest number of miles of trails, nearly 3,700 miles. This program is a huge growth area with the sales numbers of licenses, and the changes in equipment, and where they are able to ride. According to the *Michigan Comprehensive Trail Plan*, ORV has a specific target of 4,000 miles, requiring 300 more miles to achieve this target. The DNR works with 32 grant sponsors to brush, sign and maintain the trails, routes and five scramble areas.

The designated ORV trail and routes system is almost entirely on state and federal forest lands, and some county roads. The annual trail license has been \$16.25 since 1996 and needs to be increased to meet user demand for quality trails and for more riding opportunity. The Governor has proposed a fee increase in his budget proposal.

ORV (2009 MSU Study) use and users study of the Michigan Designated trail system are critical to the economic contribution that can be directly tied them:

- \$300,000 million Total Annual Spending:
- \$212 million equipment spending
- \$82 million trip spending
- Supporting 800 jobs
- \$1,839 spent for equipment / mean household

Because of the locations of the snowmobile and ORV trail systems, most of the economic impacts associated with the motorized trail programs are in the Northern Lower and Upper Peninsula.

Several recent planning initiatives, including draft *Michigan Comprehensive Trail Plan*, developed in collaboration with the Michigan Snowmobile and Trails Advisory Council, recognizes the need to connect state, regional and local trails to the people in their communities. In addition, the draft report to Governor Snyder from his Blue Ribbon Recreation and Parks Commission, *The Future of Michigan's Parks and Outdoor Recreation*, has as one of the recommendations a call for making the development of statewide and regional systems of connected trail networks one of the State's highest priorities for outdoor recreation investment over the next ten years.

These plans all speak to the broad, multi-level participation and commitment to help advance Michigan's trail planning and development and are given further purpose by the Governor's direction in his Energy and Environment message of November 2012 to develop a Michigan Showcase Trail, or a signature pure Michigan experience for hiking and biking from Detroit to Ironwood, which will become another outstanding trail for Michigan to add to our Trails State portfolio.

Michigan's rail-trail program has been recognized for many years by the Rails to Trails Conservancy as number one in the nation; in 2012 MI was recognized with 2,623 trail miles open and 258 miles in development. The state owned and designated rail-trails are nearly 1,200 miles; five of the trails are linear state parks.

The DNR has been acquiring inactive railroad corridors for recreational use since 1970, starting in the Upper Peninsula for snowmobiling. Acquisition of rail corridors has been, and continues to be a special initiative of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

The on the ground success in rail-trails is also due to the local partners that come together, like in the Iron Ore Heritage Trail, where a trail authority was formed and is supported by a millage for the construction and maintenance of over 40 mile trail network, a blend of state and local rail-trail ownerships from Chocolay Township to Republic.

The northern Lower Peninsula has several trail partners we have been fortunate to have, including MDOT, the TOMTC and several local communities. There has been 135 miles of trail surface improvements in the tip of the mitt in the past five years and several trail head projects, including Mackinaw City, Cheboygan and Millersburg.

The first trail surface improvement project with these partners was the 62 mile North Central State Trail which was dedicated in June 2008 and designated a National Recreation Trail by the Department of the Interior in June 2012.

The 71 mile North Eastern State Trail (NEST) from Alpena to Cheboygan was next and just dedicated in June 2012. The Millersburg Trailhead and Historic Depot is a project dedicated in January 2013 with unique features at the trailhead like the covered pavilion with a fire-pit. This has been a very personal community project for several people and will make Millersburg a destination on the trail map in northeast Michigan. The NEST improvements and the Millersburg trailhead has been attributed by the Presque Isle county administration and economic development manager as the catalyst for outside investors looking at business opportunities in the county.

Michigan water trails are a huge interest area and there are many local efforts that have already established water trails. On the Flat River from Greenville to Lowell DNR is working with the National Park Service and local communities on a paddle and pedal land/water trail that will parallel the river on the recently acquired Fred Meijer Flat River Valley Rail-Trail.

Also, the Department of the Interior designated 75 miles from Chicago to New Buffalo MI as the first nationally designated water trail in June 2011. Currently there is a Great Lakes water trail planning effort that is funded by Michigan Sea Grant and is going to be completed in 2013 by LIAA (Land Information Access Association).

Adding a new trail to the state trail network can be done by anyone through the DNR's Trail Proposal Process. Through comments received from the public on the *Michigan Comprehensive Trail Plan* we have recognized the need to make this process more transparent and will be introducing a 'short' application form on the department website. The DNR intends to expand all trail networks to meet the public needs within the financial abilities of the trails programs, the ability to secure competitive grant funds and with the local public advocacy.

The DNR manages competing trail uses through the trail proposal process. The trail may be designated for multiple use or specific uses. Trail use may also be defined by the terms of the land acquisition or during the trail/land planning process after land is acquired.

How does the DNR market the state trail system?

As I mentioned before, the trails programs are charged by law to acquire, develop and maintain trails for recreation. There is a portion of the funds in the motorized programs for youth rider education, but there is no trail funding for marketing.

However, we share our map data through our partners to get the word out:

Partners: MDOT (region maps)  
Michigan Snowmobile Association (trail maps by local clubs and Chambers of Commerce)  
Cycle Conservation Club of Michigan (trail maps)  
Michigan Trails and Greenways Association (state rail trail map)  
Top of Michigan Trails Council (publications for their towns and trail interests)  
Rockford Publishing (trails magazine)

Pure Michigan –currently in conversation about expanding the marketing of our natural resource based recreation opportunities.

Work with American Trails for recognition of our trail network, as well as  
Rails to Trails Conservancy for promotion of Michigan's rail trails.

Our future marketing initiatives are outlined in the draft *Michigan Comprehensive Trail Plan*, and are also a priority of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Recreation and Parks Commission and the Michigan 2013-18 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, all of which identified the need to address a cohesiveness marketing plan and improved web presence:

**RECOMMENDATION: CREATE AND IMPLEMENT A STATEWIDE MARKETING PLAN THAT ENGAGES RESIDENTS AND GUESTS IN THE STATE'S VAST ARRAY OF TRAIL OPPORTUNITIES.**

Key actions to implement this recommendation:

- ☐ Create a marketing program, brand and logo for the state's trail system.
- ☐ Provide marketing support for state and partner organizations.
- ☐ Obtain national exposure for Michigan's trails system.

Five state rail-trail projects are coming up for the 2013-2014 construction are:

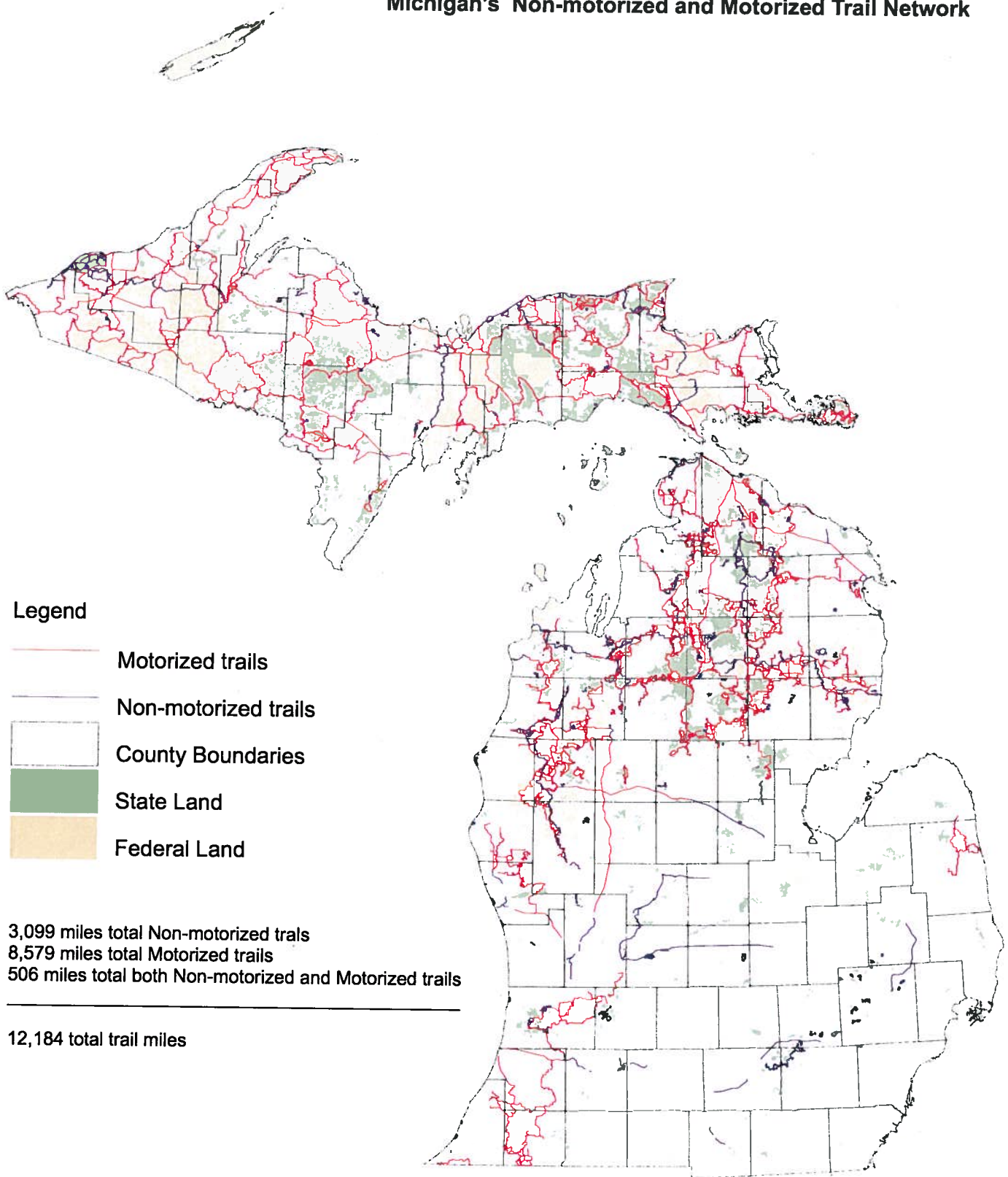
The North Western State Trail from Petoskey to Alanson  
The Pere Marquette State Trail from Reed City to Baldwin  
The Fred Meijer Grand River Valley Trail from Ionia to Saranac  
The Fred Meijer CIS Trail from Ionia to Owosso  
The Fred Meijer Flat River Valley at the City of Belding

House Tourism Committee  
Rep. Peter Pettalia 106<sup>th</sup> District  
March 21, 2012

These projects will total 75 miles of improvements for \$12.0 million, insuring our continued lead as *The Trails State*.

Thank you.  
Jim Radabaugh, State Trails Program Manager  
Parks and Recreation Division  
Department of Natural Resources

## Michigan's Non-motorized and Motorized Trail Network



March 20, 2013  
Resource Assessment Unit  
Forest Resources Division  
Michigan Department of Natural Resources

